

# FROM IMMIGRANT TO INFLUENTIAL BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION AND INNOVATION CONSULTING: AN INTERVIEW WITH VÉRONIQUE MANTI.

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## ABSTRACT

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected, with approximately 3.6% or 281 million people living outside their country of birth. New Zealand, with its unique blend of cultures and opportunities, reflects this global trend, as 28% of its population comprises individuals who began their lives elsewhere. The journey to a new country can be filled with challenges, from navigating unfamiliar cultures and languages to adapting to new professional landscapes. One such individual who has successfully made New Zealand her home is Véronique Manti. In a recent interview, Véronique shared her inspiring professional journey, detailing how she overcame these challenges to become a prominent Business Transformation and Innovation Consultant in New Zealand.

## INTRODUCTION

Véronique's story is one of resilience, adaptability, and a relentless pursuit of excellence. An immigrant to New Zealand in 2003, Véronique began her journey as a Project Coordinator at a large bank during a significant merger. Today, she is a highly respected business transformation and innovation consultant, known for her ability to drive change and foster innovation across diverse sectors. In this interview, Véronique shares her insights and experiences, offering a glimpse into the journey that led her to become a leader in her field. Her journey began before the move to New Zealand.

## VÉRONIQUE MANTI



"I began my career as an Event and Marketing Manager after studying marketing and communication. It was during this time that I was first introduced to IT projects, becoming the process owner for a client relationship management system at a commercial law firm. This role piqued my interest in how technology could drive business processes."

"When I moved to New Zealand in 2003, I worked as a Project Coordinator for a large bank undergoing a merger, which paved the way for my development as a Project Manager. I naturally gravitated towards managing stakeholder expectations and creating communication plans—essentially engaging in change management before it was widely recognised as a discipline."

However, the path to being a Change Manager was relatively recent, as the subject itself is new to New Zealand. The Change Management Institute New Zealand has only been operating here since 2005.

"My official introduction to change management came about six years ago while working for an IT services and consulting company. I was inspired by a Change Management Framework based on Prosci, which had been developed in one of their Australian offices. However, at the time, the New Zealand market wasn't quite ready for a dedicated change management practice."

Being involved with a relatively new approach meant that in order to gain experience and practice, Véronique had to move companies.

"I joined another consultancy that supported my professional development and completed Prosci training at the start of the pandemic. Upon returning to the office, the organisation underwent a merger. This was a turning point in my career, as I joined the Transformation Office and began working on key projects to support the merger. Concurrently, I developed a Change Management Practice for the consultancy's clients."

It was at this stage that Véronique decided to formalise her years of experience by pursuing a BAppMgt in Business Transformation, to consolidate her knowledge and pursue further professional practice as the demand for Change Management Specialists grew.

"This specialisation met a growing demand in the market, leading to exponential growth in my career, and after working for consultancies for a few more years, I transitioned to working independently as a contractor in October 2022."

When the Change Management Institute was initiated, the focus was on the smooth transition of technology into the workforce, but as Véronique notes, companies are realising that all changes need an integrated approach.

"This move opened up new opportunities beyond IT-based projects. I found myself working with a large Kiwi company setting up a new business unit and with another company's innovation team. I discovered a passion for where people, systems, and processes intersect, and how to best combine these elements to build successful teams and launch new products, services, and business units."

Véronique uses an adaptable set of techniques, depending on the specific needs of the transformation she is working on and draws from various methodologies, including design thinking, human-centred design, Lean Start-Up, Project Management (both waterfall and agile), and Change Management frameworks like Prosci and Kotter's 8 steps.

"I'm a voracious reader and draw inspiration from a wide range of subjects, such as psychology, behaviour, leadership, change, and communication. I also learn a great deal from the leaders I work with, who often have different backgrounds from mine, making the experience incredibly enriching".

She enjoys collaborating with visionaries to bridge the gap between the current business state and their vision for the future, through the right combination of people, processes, and systems, often resulting in new operating models. As with any future initiative there are challenges, especially with a lengthy and complex transformation.

"A recurring challenge in digital transformations is that the technology element is often ready before the people and business are fully prepared for the change. To address this, I conduct regular readiness assessments with business leaders to gauge their teams' preparedness for adopting new ways of working. I've also observed that while digital teams often work in an Agile methodology manner, businesses prefer a more Waterfall methodology approach, as it provides the clarity needed to manage change effectively."

While resistance to change is a natural human response, Véronique addresses this using the SCARF model by David Rock; Rock argues that we have a strong drive to seek out five key things: Status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness and fairness. This allows for a tailored plan of action with the relevant leaders to address staff concerns. Leadership plays a critical role in this process, as they actively involve their teams, seek and respond to feedback, and help balance their day-to-day responsibilities with the demands of the transformation.

Success is measured through a combination of factors, including the achievement of project goals, the adoption rate of new processes or technologies, and the overall impact on business performance. Performance indicators include increased efficiency, cost savings, or improved employee engagement and customer satisfaction.

AI is currently a big influence on technology change, and there are concerns about machines replacing jobs, although Véronique sees this as an opportunity to automate mundane tasks, allowing people to focus on higher-value work that requires creativity, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

"I'm particularly passionate about how to best deliver on strategy through effective operating models—bringing together people, processes, and systems to create environments where both individuals and businesses can thrive. The integration of AI will soon play a crucial role in how we reorganise and reinvent our work. Learning about emerging trends and technologies is essential to provide the best possible advice and services to my clients."

Continuous learning is key to staying ahead in this field, and Véronique's journey in business transformation and innovation consulting is a testament to her adaptability, continuous learning, and passion for helping organisations navigate change. Her expertise in integrating people, processes, and technology positions her as a valuable partner for businesses looking to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Véronique's journey is a powerful reminder that success in a new country is not just about adapting but also about thriving by continuously evolving. Her story illustrates how perseverance, a commitment to lifelong learning, and a deep understanding of the intersection between people, processes, and technology can lead to remarkable achievements. As New Zealand continues to be a vibrant fusion of cultures and ideas, professionals like Véronique are helping to shape the future of its business landscape. Her work in business transformation and innovation is not only transforming organisations but also paving the way for a more agile, resilient, and forward-thinking approach to change. Véronique's insights and experiences serve as an inspiration to others navigating similar paths, proving that with the right mindset and tools, the challenges of a new beginning can be turned into opportunities for growth and success.